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ABSTRACT

This document describes a British REPLAN program to help unemployed adults articulate and record in a personal portfolio their experience relevant to employment or education in order to help them convince employers or educators that they can do the job or benefit from the training. (REPLAN promotes educational opportunities for unemployed adults.) The document consists of seven sections, material from three case studies, and two appendices. The introduction states the project's objectives, methodology, and target groups. Section 2 describes how project services were delivered. Staff and curriculum are covered in section 3. Section 4 describes a survey of 23 employers in the Bristol area aimed at gathering data on recruitment practices, employment trends, specific job information, and the employers' response to the portfolio. Section 5 covers the participants' response to the project and the impact of the project on other services for unemployed adults. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in sections 6 and 7, respectively. The three case studies describe individual project workshops in detail. Appendix A contains as an example a portfolio developed by a participant at one of the workshops. Appendix B contains the employer survey and its findings. (CML)

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Skills Assessment and Vocational Guidance for the Unemployed

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- ☐ REPLAN is a programme to promote the development of education opportunities for the adult unemployed.

- ☐ REPLAN aims to help those who provide education by identifying and publicising the most effective ways and means of meeting the educational needs of the unemployed, and by encouraging closer collaboration between the various providing agencies.

- ☐ The programme is funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office; certain elements of the programme are also supported financially by the Training Agency. On behalf of REPLAN, the FEU and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) are managing complementary programmes of development projects and NIACE is employing and managing an advisory team of field officers led by a national co-ordinator.

- ☐ Staff development programmes are being organised by NIACE in collaboration with the Regional Advisory Councils for Further Education, with participants drawn from a wide range of institutions and agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

- ☐ Education Support Grants have been allocated to many local education authorities to strengthen the planning and co-ordination of provision for unemployed adults in their areas.

- ☐ For further information on REPLAN, contact:
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Skills Assessment and Vocational Guidance for the Unemployed

Anne Woodrow

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FOREWORD

This report is the result of a two-year FEU REPLAN project (RP321) undertaken in Avon LEA from 1986 to 1988.

It describes the process of developing and piloting of portfolio preparation, which is a process designed to be of particular value to those without many formal qualifications but possessing useful experience able to contribute to progression in education/ training or in employment. Portfolio preparation can act as a valuable corrective to selection methods which depend mainly on paper qualifications or personal presentation as it can provide a substitute for the former and can contribute to self-image and confidence to improve the latter.

The relationship of these methods to other guidance issues relevant to unemployed people is explored. Recommendations for the development of institutional and LEA policy are included.

The report is a full description of the process of development including some detailed evaluation. It should be of particular value to those responsible for providing education and training for unemployed people, particularly those concerned with developing 'Records of Achievement' in Employment Training and elsewhere.

Martin Johnson
Development Officer
Further Education Unit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Mr N Evans	Learning from Experience Trust
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Mr E Lindop	Soundwell College of Further Education
Dr M O'Callaghan	Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education
Mr D Parker	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
Mr J Togher	Bath College of Further Education

We are also grateful to the staff and unemployed people involved in the project, the employers and colleges who participated in our surveys, and the MSC Vocational Education and Training Group (Bristol office) who provided much helpful data.

A special acknowledgement must go to Pat Holloway who provided skilled and efficient secretarial support throughout the project, and to Marcia Gregory who assisted her.

Anne Woodrow
Project Development Officer

Frank Courtney (Avon LEA)
Project Director and
Chair of the Steering Committee

(Note: The Project Director from January 1986 to January 1987 was Richard Gorringe, Senior Staff Development Officer, Avon LEA.)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

PROJECT AIMS

The aims of the project were:

- to establish facilities for unemployed adults to assess and record their occupational and life skills;
- to enable unemployed people's current skills to be related to training opportunities leading to new occupational skills;
- to facilitate a process of transition from unemployment to training and, where possible, to new job opportunities;
- generally to broaden opportunities for unemployed people based on a clear recognition of their previously acquired skills and knowledge.

The purpose of the project was to develop self-evaluation and assessment for unemployed people, associated with vocational guidance, in order to improve access to vocational education, training and jobs. The funding provided by the Further Education Unit (FEU) through the REPLAN initiative was allocated for the development, support and delivery of short-course provision.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The project planned to develop and implement provision for unemployed people to enable them to review and record their attainments in a **personal portfolio** which would contain supporting documentation and evidence.

In addition, the personal portfolio should provide evidence to the individual of the skills he or she possesses, and function as a 'record of achievement', in relation to entering specific training or employment (see Woodrow, A., *Building Your Portfolio: A Basic Guide*, FEU and Appendix A: 'Specimen Portfolio'). Guidance and information regarding training and employment and its relevance to individual progression was also seen as a major input to courses/workshops funded through the project.

ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING WITHIN AVON LEA

The Further Education Service in Avon is committed to modernising arrangements for vocational education and training in many ways described in *Modernisation of Occupational Training — A Position Statement* (MSC, 1984). The County NAFE Development Plan (1986–9) outlines strategies for a coherent response to labour market needs and recognises the importance of adult training and retraining in further education (FE) provision, which is a priority area. Emphasis is placed on relating adult training to labour market needs, and the NAFE Development Plan states that:

> 'Advice and guidance services for adults is an area requiring more resources and an appropriate and efficient structure.'

There are 8 colleges of FE within the county, 7 of which have experience of developing both vocational and non-vocational provision for adults. In addition, there are 14 area adult education

centres, 6 of which are based in the adult studies departments of local colleges.

Much of the provision for unemployed people in the area has included elements of self-evaluation and guidance, notably Start, Springboard and Access courses. None, however, had focused on the systematic recording of skills in competence terms and the use of this record as a basis for progression.

TARGET GROUPS

It is widely acknowledged that many unemployed people who do not possess formal qualifications nevertheless have skills and qualities which would enable them to benefit from training/education or which would make them a useful asset to an employer, even though they are often unable to articulate these skills and qualities.

Their skills may have been acquired in a variety of settings: for example, from paid employment, voluntary work or hobbies, as well as from previous formal education and training.

The courses and workshops, designed to assist unemployed people to articulate and record such skills, were intended to be particularly relevant to the needs of the long-term unemployed who were nevertheless motivated to seek a transition to employment. It was clearly not within the scope of this project to attempt to provide answers to all the problems associated with unemployment or to develop a curriculum which would meet all the educational needs associated with unemployed people.

Because unemployment disproportionately affects members of ethnic minorities and women who have had a lengthy break from paid employment, it was expected that the marketing and planning of the provision would encourage the involvement of these groups.

2. THE PROVISION

Provision for unemployed adults was sponsored through the project in:

- an adult education centre;
- three colleges of FE;
- a probation day centre.

It was intended to provide a vehicle for implementing the project's aims through part-time courses or workshops, and to develop methods which would support student self-evaluation and offer comprehensive vocational guidance to unemployed adults.

The curriculum offer had 'core' elements:

- a review of prior learning and experience from formal and informal settings;
- a record of learning from experience described in competence terms;
- supporting evidence of competence where appropriate;
- vocational and educational guidance and planning;
- support in enabling participants to gain access to appropriate training, education and employment opportunities.

Strategies used to identify skills could include group discussion, individual analysis, skill tasters, simulation exercises and voluntary work placements with assessment, if appropriate for the individual.

Beyond the 'core' elements, each workshop/course on offer had individual characteristics both in staffing and in access to facilities available for competence accreditation (see 'Case studies'). Each course or workshop was planned to run for between three and six hours weekly.

A variety of publicity methods was used, including:

- distribution of posters and leaflets through existing networks;
- local radio and television advertising (for example, Jobline, HTV);
- tutors' personally informing unemployed people already involved in other short courses of the offer(s).

All methods had some success, but the latter was generally the most effective as the offer of portfolio preparation, however dressed up, was better incorporated in a more general education and training opportunity for publicity purposes.

Much has been written about the assessment of prior learning (for example, *Assessing Experiential Learning* Longman for FEU, 1987). The project team was keen to test methods that had been documented elsewhere and include those that were appropriate, as well as possibly developing new strategies based on experience gained through development and implementation of the curriculum.

Evidence in support of portfolio statements needed to be provided wherever possible, and could include:

- testimonials;
- certificates;
- examples of work (typing, photographs, essays, etc.);
- case studies (related to problem solving at work, for example);
- assessments.

The statements of competence formulated by the participants themselves could give 'evidence' by including specialised language (for example, the names of machinery operated or the 'correct' language used in a particular industry).

It was expected that many participants would take up some form of vocational training either during or immediately following portfolio preparation. It was recognised that assessments from vocational skills tutors should be included in the personal portfolio wherever possible as supporting evidence of competence, and that this evidence could most easily be gained through individuals having access to the free part-time training on offer at local colleges. In addition, it was agreed that this process would be further facilitated by the project meeting fees for mainstream provision, if necessary for assessment in individual cases. (Avon has a policy of reduced fees for unemployed people at one-quarter the normal rate, and they can be waived entirely in cases of individual need.)

Potential participants generally received guidance during an initial interview in which the aims of the course/workshop were outlined and the aspirations/needs of the individual were discussed.

THE COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

The institutions within which courses and workshops were funded through the project had different approaches to the work. Two of the five centres showed interest in developing an open-ended, drop-in style of provision for unemployed people in which portfolio preparation and vocational guidance were part of a broad, negotiated curriculum. Two centres integrated portfolio preparation into initial guidance and vocational training. It was found that a structured approach, individual support and firm links with and access to vocational training resulted in the highest level of recruitment, attendance and participant satisfaction.

Details of three workshops are contained in case studies 1–3 (pages 19–32).

3. STAFF AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the project, regular Review Group Meetings which involved all tutors were held centrally in order to:

- share experience;
- develop good practice;
- share and develop resources;
- share information regarding access to training, education and employment.

Previous methods for portfolio preparation were tested and appraised, and adaptations were found necessary for this group in order to:

- increase practical application in relation to returning to further training or employment;
- increase accessibility to those with literacy difficulties.

Clearly, any provision which is designed to assist the progression of unemployed people should include job-search skills, such as:

- letter writing;
- telephone technique;
- interview technique.

These were formal inputs at all the participating centres, where a variety of methods were used, including:

- group discussion;
- simulation exercises;
- worksheets;
- video;
- occasional input from outside speakers.

Effective clerical support was identified as an essential need. Motivation and commitment were most easily attained where participants were able to have their work typed as they completed each section of their portfolio:

> '... students get really spurred on by the sight of their work typed up. It's the same sort of excitement as seeing a print developing ... I like to return a completed piece of work quickly to encourage people and really prove the point of the exercise.' (Tutor, Case study 1.)

Professional secretarial back-up also ensures quality presentation of the finished document.

Through the Project Review Group, concerns were identified regarding the lack of readily available/easily usable information on training and employment. Although prospectuses, publicity material for training courses, information from the Careers Service and material from the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) (now the Training Agency) were available, these did not give any information specifically related to adult entrants. Some

tutors were inexperienced in using all the information available, and a need was identified for additional data that would identify factors relating to entry and progression for unemployed people. Two surveys were planned and carried out (see below and Appendix B), and the information was passed on to tutors as it was gathered. Funds were also made available for 'Microdoors' (Careers and Occupational Information Centre, MSC), a career guidance package which has proved invaluable in supporting comprehensive career guidance (see Case study 1).

4. PROJECT SURVEYS

EMPLOYER SURVEY (SEE APPENDIX B)

The employer survey aimed to gather data which would be particularly relevant to providing guidance for unemployed adults, including information about:

- recruitment practices;
- employment trends;
- specific job information;
- their response to a portfolio.

Surveys are often carried out with special regard to training requirements (the Training Agency) or the employment of school-leavers (Careers); we were looking for insights into employment related specifically to adult unemployed people.

The survey covered 54 jobs and the project team was surprised to discover that entry to a large number of them rarely depended on qualifications, previous experience or specific knowledge, but rather on 'qualities' and the general presentation of the individual applicant.

The interviewers were particularly welcomed by the employers (especially those in the private sector), as representatives of the Education Service:

> 'What struck me most forcibly was the enthusiasm shown by people in industry and commerce for a chance to communicate with the world of education. All the personnel officers I interviewed were very happy to give their time and attention to the project which will help inform providers of education and training about work opportunities and employers' needs. There was also much concern for the plight of the unemployed: personnel officers were keen to give any information they could which might help unemployed people have a better chance of finding work.' (Interviewer.)

SURVEY RESULTS

Data gathered included:

- contracting and expanding areas of employment;
- recruitment policy, methods of finding employees for expanding areas of work and recruitment difficulties;
- descriptions with information on pay, conditions, selection criteria, age limits and tests used;
- entry requirements, including skills, knowledge and qualities;
- specific policies related to mature applicants and ethnic minorities;
- training and progression;
- the advice personnel managers would give an unemployed person seeking work.

THE EMPLOYERS' RESPONSE TO A PORTFOLIO

Seventeen of the 23 personnel managers interviewed stated that they would like to receive a portfolio from potential employees, its principal uses being:

- it could be time-saving — *anything* that helped in the selection process was welcome;
- it could help them ask the right questions at interview;
- its existence gave some indication of the personal effectiveness of the individual; it indicated motivation (though this response could change if everybody produced a portfolio).

The employers were most interested in relevant previous employment detailed in the portfolio and not in lengthy descriptions of work or hobbies which did not obviously relate to the job applied for.

The portfolio used in the interviews was that given in Appendix A; a particularly interesting comment was made by the manager of a building refurbishment firm who said that the DIY skills outlined in the portfolio would actually 'put him off' employing the individual. He went on to say that 'amateur work in building has very little relevance to the needs of the industry ... we'd prefer to train someone with no experience or employ a craftsman'. If this applies in other industries, it raises questions about the usefulness to employment of skills gained in informal settings.

Other points of particular significance made by interviewees were:

- concern was expressed at the lack of liaison between FE and industry;
- the value of work experience placements in selection was stressed;
- people need help in 'selling themselves': it is surprising how badly some people perform at interview;
- more is expected of older people in terms of self-presentation;
- people should ask for feedback more often if they are unsuccessful at interview;
- seasonal/temporary work often leads to permanent employment: those involved in guidance should stress this more often.

This survey was of particular value to tutors working within the project: they gained specific information which could be passed on to participants, thus enabling them to acquire the kind of knowledge which resulted in increased confidence and activity in seeking employment, and a more positive attitude to the development of their own interview skills.

FE SURVEY

The FE survey was carried out in three contrasting colleges in order to:

- identify flexible entry requirements to mainstream certificated vocational courses for adult returners;
- identify those courses which offer good prospects of progression into HE and employment;
- establish whether the institutions' and tutors' experience of adults on mainstream courses was positive and what barriers to access existed.

The following paragraphs give a summary of the results.

Flexible entry
The following differences in approach were evident:

- College A, despite having no adult education department or formal institutional policy towards unemployed people, is nevertheless flexible in practice at departmental and course level towards enabling adult returners to have access to relevant vocational provision.
- College B has developed an open access policy across the curriculum in order to meet the needs of unemployed people.
- College C does not offer flexible entry for unemployed people to mainstream vocational courses, although it offers a wide range of special short-course provision.

Progression from FE for unemployed people
Colleges A and B both gave many examples of adult students gaining employment or places on degree-level courses on completing a certificated mainstream course. College A, in particular, which has many links with local and national industry (for example, in aeronautics and electronics), could give specific examples of adult students who had entered their courses without formal qualifications, and whose progression compared favourably with that of school-leavers who entered courses with 'O' or 'A' levels.

Experience of adult unemployed students on mainstream courses
The colleges (A and B) with the widest experience of adults on certificated vocational courses both reported that adults performed in general as well as, if not better than, school-leavers and achieved excellent end-results. Many heads of department reported that the presence of adults on courses had a stabilising influence on other students.

Barriers to access in FE for unemployed adults
Beyond the obvious barriers that exist (for example, formal entry requirements, funding and personal finance), the most significant reported by the institutions was initial guidance which is often inadequate and not related to either the market-place or the best interests of the individual. College A in particular expressed concern that unemployed adults referred to the college by other agencies (for example, adult education centres or voluntary organisations) were often encouraged to apply for the most obviously 'attractive' courses, such as Graphic Design and Hairdressing. It is significant that these courses have the greatest number of applicants and entry is therefore highly competitive. In some cases (for example, Hairdressing) preference is shown by

the industry for younger employees. The least obviously 'attractive' courses, and the ones that mature unemployed people were therefore least likely to be guided towards, were often the ones which were both the easiest to gain entry to and the ones that offered the best future employment prospects (for example, Bookbinding, Electronics).

5. EVALUATION

The evaluation covered the following areas:

- the participants' response to the provison;
- the courses/workshops themselves;
- the impact of the work of the project on other provision for unemployed people.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Because the client group was variable between centres, it is difficult to give a percentage breakdown of participant characteristics. The following details have been summarised from Record Sheets:

- overall, a slightly higher number of males participated;
- the majority were long-term (9+ months) unemployed, and some had not worked for many years;
- the 'average' participant was in his/her late 30s, although the oldest was 57, the youngest was 20, and many were in their early 40s;
- the majority were 'semi-skilled', though a small number could be classed as having special needs, and some had degrees or professional qualifications;
- all participants identified goals and specific training interests on recruitment, though these were frequently modified or changed on completion, on the basis of the portfolio and information/guidance obtained.

The involvement of people belonging to minority ethnic groups was disappointing: out of a total number of 120+ participants, 6 were of Afro-Caribbean origin, and only 1 of Asian origin. No reason has been identified for this lack of response. Satisfaction with the provision was expressed by those who completed an evaluation. It is possible that those centres with links with black local community groups did not exploit these fully in marketing their provision.

All those who used the courses/workshops for more than two sessions were asked to complete evaluation sheets. The following is a summary of the results:

- all participants reported a significant increase in confidence which led to more activity in pursuing goals;
- all stated that the courses/workshops increased their knowledge of opportunities, and that they felt they had been able to plan for their future progression and set realistic goals;
- with the exception of two people, all found building a portfolio a useful part of the process;
- all identified future progression;
- most progressed immediately to training or education courses or employment, and all this group identified the provision as being invaluable in this process.

'I've taken up free training since completing the course ... I've realised that much of my experience which I just took for granted can actually help me in the future.'

'Recording my past experiences enabled me to write a much better letter of application ... I now have a job.'

'I've no proper qualifications ... the portfolio has helped me get the training I need.'

'It was good to share experiences ... this gave me a lot of confidence. The tutor was very helpful and positive.'

It must be stressed that there was no 'typical' client: at times centres had more female than male participants; or more older or younger people; or fewer able/very able participants. All had widely differing experience and future training/employment goals. The only common factors were a recognised need for guidance and an interest in identifying skills acquired in previous experience.

COURSE/WORKSHOPS EVALUATION

The following observations are based on:

- monitoring of the courses/workshops in each centre;
- participant evaluation, written and verbal;
- tutor reports.

The provision was **most** successful in case of recruitment, regular attendance, confidence enhancement, client satisfaction and progression, where:

- the offer was clearly stated in initial publicity and potential participants were made aware of the specific objectives which were to be met;
- a short time structure was adhered to (for example, 12 x 3 hours weekly rather than 'open-ended');
- tutors continually focused on clear objectives;
- tutors and senior staff constantly reviewed project aims and their successful achievement in terms of individual participants' progress;
- tutors reacted quickly to, and followed up, drop-outs/ poor attenders;
- the institution was prepared to review portfolio preparation and guidance procedures and to develop new methods on the basis of that review;
- the tutors selected to do the work were positive, cheerful, non-patronising and had some background in, or awareness of, vocational training/industry;
- the tutors did not encourage irrelevant personal disclosure, particularly in group settings;
- efficient secretarial back-up was available.

The provision was **least** successful where:

- the course/workshop had very broad objectives rather than a

limited focus: that is, they stated the portfolio/guidance as a 'possible outcome';

- an open-ended time-scale was offered;
- the tutors engaged in delivering the offer saw themselves in a wider role (for example, as a counsellor regarding any difficulty individuals might have);
- the tutors had limited knowledge/experience of vocational training;
- the institution did not evaluate/develop critically the provision in response to poor recruitment, attendance and outcomes (that is, the quality of the portfolios produced, the progression of the individual).

Many of the difficulties involved in delivering the provision were overcome during the project. Particular areas of concern identified were:

- the objectives and content of the curriculum offer;
- the methods used in delivering the curriculum;
- the pace of the work;
- the progression of the participants.

These areas need to be continuously evaluated and questioned in terms of their success, but perhaps the most important question to ask, and the one which is seldom raised with reference to 'free' provision for unemployed people is:

> Are we giving good value? Would these people pay to attend, if they were able to?

The tutors involved in the project have seen it as valuable to their own skills development in their work with unemployed people:

> 'I am particularly aware of the practical help and support in developing guidance this project has given us. It's been an opportunity to learn for me, too.'
>
> 'I am grateful for the training opportunity that the last six months has given me. I can now incorporate portfolio preparation into my other work. I now know more about training opportunities and jobs.'
>
> 'For myself, the personal thanks is more than I have ever got before from students. It's raised my confidence too!'

THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The centres involved in the work of the project are either continuing the workshops/courses through other sources of funding or are incorporating many of the methods developed into other provision for unemployed people (for example, Access courses, Restart). Beyond directly funded provision, the overall impact can be identified through the wider use of the project resources.

The resources were made available throughout Avon to staff responsible for planning and delivering provision in:

- Further Education Staff Development Unit (FESDU) projects;

- some NAFE/MSC-funded projects;
- adult education centres;
- adult basic education (ABE);
- Access courses.

An evaluation exercise was carried out to establish which resources had been used widely, and in which context they had been used. Sixty per cent responded and all stated they were either using or planning to use one or more of the resources developed.

PORTFOLIO HANDBOOK AND SPECIMEN COMPLETE PORTFOLIOS

A portfolio handbook and specimen completed portfolios were introduced in or adapted for:

- projects relating to adult unemployed people;
- projects(NAFE-funded) concerned with credit transfer, flexible, experience-based entry and modular delivery;
- ABE;
- return-to-work/women returner courses;
- individual guidance;
- courses offered in local prisons;
- Access to Higher Education (HE) courses.

The resources have had some limited use outside Avon (regionally), most notably at a college in Somerset, where portfolio preparation has been incorporated into a 10-week course called 'Make Your Experience Count' which includes 'tasters' in practical craft skills. Both tutors and the unemployed people involved find the resources effective.

In addition, the results of the surveys have been valuable in improving guidance offered to unemployed people. Survey results have been made available to tutors involved in guidance and have provided information which has had some impact in:

- identifying suitable progression routes for adults in FE;
- devising strategies which enable people to improve their ability to gain employment.

6. CONCLUSIONS

1. The fact that this project was centrally managed, rather than based in a single institution, meant that development and delivery could be tested in different contexts, thereby facilitating the evaluation of the project aims, methods and outcomes.

2. Preparing a personal portfolio is a useful exercise which:

   - raises the confidence and motivation of the individual by:
     - — focusing on concrete achievements;
     - — building an awareness of marketable experience, skills and qualities;
   - provides a relevant tool for use in guidance by enabling the participant and tutor to identify skills and interests that could usefully be built upon or used in a new direction;
   - provides a document which could be used to gain entry to training or employment by:
     - — identifying competence and experience relevant to a particular course or type of employment;
     - — giving an indication of the personal qualities of the individual.

3. A poorly produced portfolio can be barrier to progression. To be successful it should:

   - contain positive statements of achievement (what the individual can do) backed up, wherever possible, by independent evidence;
   - be clear and concise; lengthy descriptions of prior experience are seldom appropriate;
   - have a high standard of presentation.

4. It should be recognised by all concerned that a portfolio in itself does not guarantee progression. It should be used selectively and with discretion as:

   - a personal record to be used as a resource in writing letters of application or filling in application forms and as a confidence-booster (for example, prior to interviews);
   - as a document which could be presented to selectors, either in its entirety or in part, to support applications for which it is particularly relevant.

5. Methods used in portfolio preparation have the most success, regardless of the level of ability of the participants, where they are simple, direct and can be delivered within a short time-scale.

6. The project workers found that the existing resources available and methods recommended for assessing and recording experiential learning were difficult to use and ineffective. This could have caused them to question the product (portfolio) as an unrealistic outcome of the provision. However, because the

portfolio was an identified aim on which funding was based, priority was given to the development of methods and resources which related to the needs of this project.

7. The above indicates that it should not be assumed that available resources will be appropriate, and that staff and resource development should be curriculum-led and not based on theories and practice from unrelated contexts.

8. Although it is widely accepted that vocational guidance for unemployed people should be a priority, expertise in giving comprehensive guidance is variable. Too often it is geared towards filling places on courses aimed specifically at the unemployed within particular institutions and does not always take account of the abilities and experiences of the individual, or the needs of, and opportunities within, the local labour market.

9. Much non-vocational provision offered to unemployed people is loose in structure and very general in content. It would appear that there is often a misconception that the unemployed are a homogeneous group and that, therefore, provision, however informal and lacking in defined outcomes, will somehow fulfil their needs through a negotiated curriculum. The evidence, however, suggests that they gain most from being involved in, and show a greater commitment to, provision which has clearly defined objectives with measurable outcomes.

10. Many of those who work with unemployed people attempt to offer wide 'support and counselling' rather than concentrating on developing practical skills and strategies which aim to enable people to progress from unemployment. This over-supportive approach can lead to dependence and reinforce unhelpful attitudes — for example, towards becoming involved in training initiatives, or employment which has a low initial pay level.

11. Many unemployed people would welcome the opportunity to gain recognised certification through mainstream vocational FE provision but are frequently unable to because of:

    - a lack of institutional policy which supports adult access;
    - being guided towards special short-course provision funded by the Training Agency, especially if the institution concerned has difficulty in filling places on these courses;
    - the difficulty of obtaining financial support.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

1. Provision for unemployed people should be developed and marketed in such a way that clear, if limited, objectives are stated which have a chance of being met within a realistic time-scale.

2. Provision which identifies portfolio preparation as an outcome should not have a group-based mode of attendance unless there is either a clearly identified group goal (for example, Access to FE/HE) or common prior experience. Individual guidance which includes portfolio preparation is generally the most successful, in terms of both participant satisfaction and use of tutor time and resources.

3. Portfolio preparation should be offered alongside other vocational training for unemployed people wherever possible.

4. Adequate facilities and resources to support the preparation and production of portfolios must be allocated (for example, secretarial support).

5. Staff involved in delivering this type of provision for unemployed people should be carefully selected with regard to:

   - prior experience, which should include some background in vocational training and, preferably, experience in industry;
   - personal qualities, which should include a positive, cheerful, pragmatic approach to the work and the ability and confidence to support progression of the individual (for example, approaching selectors in FE/HE and prospective employers);

6. Evaluation of provision for unemployed people should be continual and must recognise that they tend to be uncritical of the 'free' courses they attend. Any criticism should be taken very seriously, including 'silent' criticisms such as drop-out and erratic attendance.

7. Institutions should respond to the results of evaluation quickly and adapt or change their provision as necessary in terms of objectives, content, methods and modes of delivery.

8. Institutions should ensure that the guidance they provide for unemployed people is comprehensive and gives priority to their individual needs.

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY POLICY

1. A coherent policy on entry to mainstream courses should be developed which could include not only the promotion of flexible access but also the allocation of resources which would enable institutions to develop open access across the curriculum.

2. Training for tutors responsible for providing guidance for unemployed people (however informally) should be given priority and should include:

- sources of labour market information and how to use it;
- comprehensive information on training/education opportunities available (not only those provided by the FE/HE sector);
- promoting liaison between adult education, FE and other agencies (for example, Careers, the Training Agency) in order to network information or gain access to resources.

3. In order to ensure comprehensive, high-quality guidance, LEAs should provide resources and take responsibility for the gathering and dissemination of information (for example, related to training and the labour market) to those institutions and staff who have contact with unemployed people.
4. There should be systematic monitoring and evaluation of provision for unemployed people at LEA level, the results of which should influence both course provision and the allocation of resources.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

Finally, it must be emphasised that no single opportunity offered to unemployed people is going to solve all the difficulties which they may experience. We should, therefore, give priority to developing and offering provision which has identifiable outcomes and which can be delivered in financially viable ways, thus overcoming some of the problems institutions face owing to short-term funding policy.

BACKGROUND TO CASE STUDIES 1 AND 2

WESTON-SUPER-MARE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

The college serves an area of Avon which has a mixed economy and includes manufacturing industry, tourism and rural areas. Weston itself and the small towns and villages in the area are within travel-to-work distance of Bristol, and it is estimated that 30% of the working population are actually employed in Bristol. Unemployment in the area during the 1980s has been slightly higher than the average for the rest of the county, although there are 'pockets' where the figure is estimated at 22%. The figures are also affected by seasonal variations.

Since 1984 the college has developed extensive provision for unemployed people. Initial REPLAN funding (NIACE) provided an opportunity to review provision for the unwaged, and a coherent approach was developed throughout the college co-ordinated by the Vice-Principal, who is also the Area Adult Education Officer. A full-time Lecturer II was appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating the programme for unwaged people throughout the college. Courses offered are not department based, although every department is involved in the delivery of training.

Funding for the provision for unwaged people is mainly provided through the Avon Training Agency (ATA), an Avon County Council organisation which acts as a managing agent for provision funded by the Training Agency.

NEEDS ANALYSIS AND MARKETING

The college identified the following aims:

- to find ways of getting unemployed people into the college;
- to deliver programmes that would not only meet the needs of unemployed people, but also encourage their continued participation through appropriate teaching styles, easy access and flexibility;
- to develop appropriate counselling and guidance procedures.

Through outreach work the college set up an efficient network across the catchment area; this included pubs, shops and voluntary organisations as well as adult education centres, jobcentres, libraries, Careers Offices and the then Department of Health and Social Security.

A Steering Committee was formed which includes representation from local bodies and which monitors and evaluates the provision. An internal college network was also formed, involving staff from each department. Unemployed people were invited to open days which had been publicised throughout the network, and at which they were asked to fill in a questionnaire in return for free refreshments.

The questionnaire sought to identify the priorities of the unemployed people themselves and identified specific skills training in a number of occupational areas as well as general education (for example, maths/English); it also included topics

normally associated with provision for the unemployed related to coping with unemployment.

Although 340 people initially completed the questionnaires, all expressing interest in vocational options, none identified coping skills as a need.

The college recognised the importance of high-quality information/publicity for the provision. A booklet was professionally produced which included information on all courses available, and this was supported by individual leaflets giving details of specific opportunities.

DELIVERY AND RECRUITMENT

Several modes of attendance for unemployed people are available, including infill on mainstream courses. A particularly successful initiative is the short, modular training programme which includes options for beginners, non-beginners and skills updating, organised on a 10-week x 7½-day basis. During 1986–7, 27 different training options were offered and, on average, there were 400 unemployed people participating at any given time and a further 200+ on the waiting list. The total number of people involved in the programme between June 1985 and May 1987 was 750.

After April 1987 the funding for AIA provision was reduced and the college had to limit the number of options offered to 12. In June 1987 there were 185 people participating and 184 on the waiting list.

Since February 1987 the provision has also included an Open Access Centre which offers computer-based training at different levels in keyboarding, word processing, typing and computer programming. It is open six days per week (including evenings and Saturday mornings), and an hourly booking system is used. Employed people pay £1 per hour to use this facility, which is free to unemployed people. An average of 90 people per week use the Centre, many booking more than one option.

COLLEGE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT

The obvious advantage for the project in funding provision at Weston was the expertise already developed in marketing and delivering a variety of provision for unemployed people, particularly in vocational skills training. It was expected that the project guidance workshops would have firm links with other available options.

The college, as well as being willing to participate in a new development, was also concerned that it should improve its guidance system for unemployed people, and saw the project as an opportunity to explore new methods.

Case studies 1 and 2 describe the funded provision in detail.

CASE STUDY 1

Workshop: 'Using Your Experience'

Duration: January - December 1987, 12 x 3 hours weekly (6 hours weekly from September 1987)

No. of tutors: 2

The workshop was offered initially to people who were hoping to enrol on the modular training programme available at the college.

Aim

To enable participants to review and produce a record of their experience, and to use this as a basis for progression.

Objectives

The participants will be able to:

- identify and record their prior experience and learning;
- explore different options and relate these to future employment;
- select appropriate training from offers available within the college;
- receive accreditation for skills demonstrated from vocational course tutors;
- establish realistic future goals;
- devise strategies to enable them to seek and obtain future progression;
- organise and present a portfolio in a form which will enhance their future progression.

DELIVERY

A half-day weekly workshop was piloted from January to March 1987. One tutor was responsible for delivering the programme, which included both group and individual activities, job-search skills and some visits (for example to Jobcentres and the local Enterprise Agency).

Initially 19 people expressed interest, many of these deciding that they were either not ready to take up the offer at this stage and/or that it was inappropriate to their needs. Some used the workshop on a drop-in basis and 6 people completed the programme. All took part in at least one other training option from the college vocational skills provision.

The range of prior experience, background and ability of those taking part was diverse. The group included a former special needs YTS trainee (aged 20), a woman in her 30s with a degree in French, a man in his 30s who had been twice made redundant and a woman of 54. They all were motivated to progress but had expressed difficulty in making decisions about what to do next.

Despite this diversity, the group had a high degree of autonomy:

> 'The willingness of individuals to try to help each other out and support each other when they feel negative is great - they seem to not be put off by their natural differences and there is mutual acceptance that they are in the same boat which makes them identify strongly with one another.' (Tutor.)

At this stage of the project few resources were available to aid portfolio development, but much use was made of a small number of specimen portfolios completed in other centres and an action verb list.

This lack of resources meant that the tutor was often going over the same ground during individual work with the participants - especially as they had such a wide ability range. Nevertheless, portfolios had been completed, and individual progression had been identified by the end of 12 weeks.

The tutor also liaised with vocational skills tutors throughout the programme, and they all co-operated by releasing participants for individual counselling when necessary, and by arranging that they obtained signed assessments for inclusion in their portfolios.

PROGRESSION

Of the 6 who completed the programme:

- 2 gained entry to full-time training courses;
- 2 gained entry to part-time training courses;
- 1 started work on a community programme;
- 1 gained employment.

EVALUATION

All the evaluations were positive:

> 'I felt that recording past experiences and achievements was very useful. It gave me the opportunity to view myself in a broader sense — by identifying my strengths and preferences, etc. ... it enabled me to make firm decisions.'

> 'I would never have found out about or even been interested in the accounting technician qualification if I hadn't done this course.'

> 'It really raised my confidence and helped me sort out what I want to do. I feel it will give me more chance of getting a job. I can say more positive things about my experience now.'

The tutor and the college had become very committed to continuing the provision beyond this pilot stage and recognised the raising of the confidence and effectiveness of the individual as being the prime benefit for the participants:

> 'The boost in confidence and the feeling of self-worth when students see their work [portfolio] is immense. Almost all have said, "I didn't think I'd done much but when you see it written down, it's a lot isn't it" .' (Tutor.)

The initial success of the workshop was recognised, but the following difficulties were identified:

- a high initial drop-out rate;
- problems in pacing the work to match a variety of differing abilities, whilst at the same time ensuring that all participants had the individual attention they required.

It was agreed that, given a reasonable level of initial recruitment, two tutors would be funded from April 1987 to develop and deliver the provision. By this stage of the project the handbook *Building Your Portfolio: A Basic Guide* (published by FEU) had been developed and it was expected that this would ease the burden of delivering the portfolio work considerably.

During this period the workshop was used by 18 people, often on a drop-in basis, with 8 attending regularly and completing portfolios. Those who did not complete portfolios received guidance and help in completing CVs. Most were referred to appropriate training within the college.

Again the evaluation was very positive:

> 'Thank you ... you have helped me a great deal, both in providing me with information and ideas to be used when the time is right and in your kindness which has given me the confidence to come and ask for help if I need it in the future.'
>
> 'I had already produced a CV and would not have ever thought of producing a personal portfolio — it really helped me organise myself ... '.
>
> 'It was so helpful. I now know more about myself — I no longer think that anything I've done has been wasted. It's given me the confidence I needed to actually approach an employer, rather than just respond to job ads.'

All the participants have progressed and used their portfolio in decision making about future training or careers.

The tutors still had some reservations about the amount of time spent in taking people through the process and in giving them adequate guidance; even with better resources and double staffing, there were still times when participants could not have immediate help and had to wait for attention from the tutors.

The fact that the participants were seen in a group rather than individually could lead occasionally to a loss of focus:

> 'With groups it takes more skill and experience than I've got to handle effectively a discussion where everyone wants to have their say. Some run on with personal problems - how do you manage to deal with them in a tactful way and ensure that everyone has a chance?' (Tutor.)

Although there are obviously benefits to be gained from being a member of a group, producing a portfolio is a personal activity, and guidance is different in each case. The tutors also identified the need for more expertise in vocational guidance:

> 'It is sometimes difficult to take things further and help with

the next move due to lack of thorough knowledge of job availability or training.' (Tutor.)

The college wanted to make a long-term commitment to this work and therefore the method used needed to be as efficient and cost-effective as possible.

FINAL DEVELOPMENT

Since September 1987, 'Using Your Experience' has operated as a guidance service on the basis of individual appointments (usually of ½ hour) with the two tutors timetabled for three hours per week each. During October 1987, 17 people were engaged in building up a portfolio and they also used 'Microdoors', a comprehensive career-guidance computer package.

'Microdoors' offers information on:

- areas of employment and specific jobs;
- personal characteristics required;
- entry and training (including adult entry);
- opportunities and prospects;
- where to obtain further information.

Each category includes information relating to such areas as working conditions, hours and patterns of work. The tutors can have access to a wide range of information within seconds.

> 'It takes, on average, 6 x ½ hour sessions to guide a student to identifying their needs. This includes building a comprehensive portfolio, individual counselling, using "Microdoors" and identifying strategies for progression ... the introduction of "Microdoors" has enhanced the service tremendously.' (Tutor.)

The 'Microdoors' facility has also been used with success by students on other courses. Outside agencies are also negotiating with the college over use of this facility.

The college made a firm commitment to continue 'Using your Experience', and 'Microdoors' will also be incorporated into the Open Access Centre and used throughout the college.

The tutors and participants express satisfaction with the appointment system, though the tutors recognise that they must guard against a 'doctor's surgery/production line' atmosphere.

> 'The objective of the portfolio necessitates concentration and application to the task. It is incredible how quickly a result can be achieved, particularly with students who enjoy the mental exercise of summing things up. Those people who do most of the portfolio work on their own and bring it in to be discussed and typed seem to be those who most value the result and know how to use it. So what's new?' (Tutor.)

CASE STUDY 2

Course: 'Discovering Opportunities in Further and Higher Education'

Duration of course: 3 hours x 12 weeks, January-April 1987

No. of tutors: 1

This course was specifically aimed at unemployed adults who were motivated to pursue FE/HE and who had some academic ability but needed support in:

- making an informed choice;
- applying for courses and obtaining entry to FE/HE institutions.

Aims

To provide the students with an opportunity for:

- a better understanding of opportunities in FE and HE and their relevance to careers;
- a better understanding of their own skills and knowledge, and the ability to use these in applications to FE and HE courses;
- an improvement in self-confidence;
- an improvement in study skills.

Objectives

Participants should be able to:

- show awareness of access and access to FE/HE courses in the area;
- express aspirations and career objectives clearly;
- show awareness of career prospects and training courses locally;
- accredit themselves with skills acquired from experience of life;
- use a network of colleagues established on the course to sustain self-confidence and give advice;
- express their own confidence and self-esteem;
- approach various agencies concerned with education and training;
- show awareness of agencies concerned with funding and student support in education and training;
- write a letter of application and a CV;
- know what is involved in interview techniques;
- identify their own study skills;
- demonstrate an understanding of the elements involved in successful study.

This course was offered in the spring term only, so that course members would be able to apply on completion for admission to

courses beginning in September, if appropriate.

The wide-ranging objectives of the course required students to be prepared to undertake some home-study.

RECRUITMENT

The lecturer responsible for interviewing all applicants for part-time courses open to unemployed people in the college reviewed student records and identified a group of people who would possibly be interested in, and who would benefit from, the offer. They were sent information about the course and an invitation to attend a preliminary meeting. Three of those who initially expressed interest decided after the first meeting that the course was not for them. Nine people completed the course.

CONTENT AND DELIVERY

The following were significant inputs:

- identification of the direction, aspirations and needs of individuals;
- portfolio development;
- information on the availability of training and education in the Avon area;
- academic skills 'tasters': essay writing, book review and critical analysis;
- how to use a library and books for reference purposes;
- discussion techniques and their value in learning;
- information on finance (grants);
- interview techniques;
- making applications to FE/HE;
- guidance and goal setting.

Methods used included group and individual work, outside speakers, simulation exercises and academic work which was often completed as homework and assessed by the tutor. Students were given the opportunity to review the course.

VARIATIONS

The principal variation was in the area of portfolios. The principles were successfully put over but many of the group, particularly those intending to gain vocational qualifications and enter courses in FE rather than HE, chose not to work systematically to develop a full personal portfolio at this stage.

The portfolio, in the context of this course, was used to clarify the aims of the individual regarding progression in FE/HE and consisted largely of examples of academic work assessed by the tutor.

> 'There was a high need amongst the students for individual counselling and group work to establish self-confidence and clarify purpose. Towards the end of the course there was again a need to clarify opportunities and set goals through individual counselling.' (Tutor.)

The students were asked to evaluate the course, in terms of both the relevance of its content and its usefulness to them personally.

The student comments were overwhelmingly positive, although most wished that the course was longer. One student found the portfolio elements of the course the least useful. However, two identified the portfolio work as being one of the most useful aspects of the course.

> 'I have gained a full understanding of the opportunities available to the unemployed, mature person ... all of it was very helpful.'
>
> 'It was beneficial because I came to it completely open-minded and from the [academic] "tasters", etc. I think it's told me that I don't really want full-time education ... it's spurred me on to be more positive in other fields.'
>
> 'The most helpful parts of the course were discussions led by specialists - finance and using a library for example. Being able to discuss things in a group boosted my confidence ...'
>
> 'I gained confidence and practical experience in preparing a CV and portfolio and it has helped me decide what to do next.'
>
> '... I can now plan ways to fill my time more rewardingly ... at my age [46] I am unwilling to commit myself to full-time education in the hope of gaining employment. I will study for interest - if a job results that will be even better.'
>
> 'Stimulating, rewarding ... much more valuable than I had really expected it to be.'
>
> 'The course overall must be considered a success. It could easily be improved by establishing a more coherent group of students. There is the obvious problem that it is difficult to find the tutor-time resources necessary to give adequate pre-course counselling which would establish the outline of the course and purpose of every unemployed student *before* they start. Lack of crèche facilities worsened the difficulty that parents had in attending on a regular basis. The students expressed a desire for the course to be longer but this could equally well be interpreted as a need for more counselling and guidance.'
>
> 'The principal success area lay in the establishment of self-confidence and the willingness to identify opportunities and move forward. Erratic attendance by some group members inhibited this process a little.'
>
> '... all nine of the effective course participants identified appropriate further or higher education and left with a clear intention of pursuing such activity.'

Since September 1987, the tutor has been responsible for a full-time Access to Higher Education course with links to Bath College of Higher Education, Bristol Polytechnic and Bath University. Many of the techniques and styles developed on

'Discovering Opportunities' have been incorporated into the Access course.

STUDENT DETAILS

SEX/ AGE	SITUATION	PREVIOUS EDUCATION	PREVIOUS OCCUPATION(S)	EXPRESSED PURPOSE	INTENDED FOLLOW-ON
Male 46	Divorced. Single-household. 2 dependent daughters.	5 'O' levels. Non-completed ONC.	Trainee draughtsman. Computer operator. Electrical wireman. Cost clerk. Self-employed builder.	'Explore possibilities of filling time more rewardingly.'	Decided against long commitment to HE. Will take 'A' level (p/t) for interest only and Photography 'Start' course.
Female 24	Married. 2 children (2, 4 years). Illness of children led to erratic attendance	3 'O' levels.	Health authority clerical worker.	Wanted to know what was available in FE and HE.	Evening classes in shorthand and typing. Take BTEC National when children little older.
Male 53	Divorced. About to remarry.	'A' level Engineering. Degree equivalent. Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing.	Research technician. Technical author. Company sales manager. Publicity manager. Community Programme (Scheme manager).	Find a new direction.	Range of Start courses at college for interest. Gained place on FETC (City and Guilds).
Male 45	Married. 5 children.	2 'O' levels.	Sports retailer. Sports retail manager. Retail branch manager.	Develop new interests and new career plans.	'A' level programme and community work to take course in HE (to be decided).
Female 36	Divorced. Single-household.	1 'A' level. 2 'O' levels. Foundation course. Art Diploma Industrial Art.	Freelance illustrator. Advertising agency.	'Wanted to find out what was available.' Build confidence.	Start own business with Enterprise Allowance Scheme. Start City and Guilds FETC in September.
Female 21	Single. Left parents' home, living in flat. Suffered illness on course.	3 'O' levels. Full-time NAFE Engineering.	Various work as care assistant. Voluntary work.	Try to get firmer idea of what to do.	Access course for CQSW or 'A' levels (p/t).
Female 34	Married, 4 children.	Left school very early due to parental pressures. Wanted to pursue art.	Clerical, till marriage.	Explore potential art-related career.	1 'O' + 2 'A' levels to lead to Foundation Course in Art/ Design
Female 36	Divorced. 1 child.		Sales. Secretary. Library assistant. On Community Programme, as library assistant.	Gain a qualification to aid career prospects in library work.	City and Guilds Library and Information Course. Plus office and keyboard skills updating.
Female 42	Married.	3 'O' levels.	Clerical. Market Research.	Find out what was available.	Begin access course or take 'A' levels (depending on grant).

CASE STUDY 3: A PROBATION DAY CENTRE

> 'Each person who achieved portfolio work in any way, even those who did not complete their work, responded with a confident and healthy approach to the next stages of looking for work or other interests. It often showed in personal body care, e.g. hair, clothes, etc., and in many I noticed a change in their attitudes to other people, e.g. conversational changes that can lead to other routes to change.' (Tutor)

Project funding: 3 hours per week, January–July 1987 (term time)

No. of tutors: 1

The day centre — the only one of its kind in the county — situated in a church community centre on the northern outskirts of Bristol, was started in February 1986 by the officer in charge of the local probation office. As well as serving as a place where clients regularly meet their probation officers, it offers advice on education and employment through the Probation Service, recreational activities, snack lunches and basic education. The centre is also open to unemployed people, and they too can often benefit from the informal discussion groups and counselling offered on, for example, careers and finance.

The majority of probation clients and others who attend are under 30:

> 'The people who attend usually have great personal difficulties which have built up over a long period of time and it is impossible to solve these problems in a few hours or even months. Some have attended long after they have been released from their probation contract. This is the overwhelming benefit of the Day Centre, that it has proved to offer support in the lives of people who otherwise would have nothing after their contact with probation has ended. These people can slowly gain their personal confidence within a small caring group and eventually begin to tackle their other problems as necessary. I have witnessed change in many individuals over the 20 months I have worked in the group, but it is slow progress.' (Tutor.)

The funding for the ABE tutor was about to end in December 1986, and it was agreed that the FEU project would support the tutor provided that the project aims were met through her work. The probation officer was also interested in exploring the use of portfolios for young people on probation, particularly from the confidence-building viewpoint.

The agreed objectives for the project provision were that participants should be able to:

- identify their strengths and interests through a review of their prior learning and experience;
- record their experience and achievements in the form of personal portfolios;
- plan their future short-term learning;

- gain on-course accreditation through voluntary work, if appropriate;
- set long-term goals and receive support in carrying these through (for example, progression to training, education and employment).

METHOD

It was agreed that the project officer should assist in individual work with the participants and that she would ensure that any portfolio work was typed and returned to them on a continuing basis.

Initially, group sessions were held in which clients were introduced to portfolios: their purpose was discussed and examples were shown. A small number of the group grasped their significance very quickly and were enthusiastic to make a start. However, it soon became clear to the tutor that the groupwork method was not fully effective in this context. Some participants were reluctant to discuss seriously their prior experience within a group. Many had serious literacy problems, so needed constant individual help in recording their competences. After the first two or three group sessions, it was decided to try other approaches to portfolio preparation:

> 'The resistance element in the probation work has to be mentioned. In other settings REPLAN groups are presumably attended by clients who want to progress, and therefore have high motivation, if not ability. In the probation group the reason for attending is to "sign on" officially. They often attend very reluctantly. This reluctance has to be overcome first and then a reason for wanting to gain something from the group has to be given. They often feel inadequate, like social outcasts, great shame and guilt and certainly hopelessness. Some can be aggressive, others extremely withdrawn. The strongest feeling is that they will never find a job because of the stigma of probation, so future planning is a waste of time. All these feelings have to be surmounted. There is also a very strong reluctance to anything else that can be classed as "official" and therefore many would not offer names and addresses at first. Some will not do this at all.' (Tutor.)

It was agreed to pursue the portfolio and guidance work on an individual basis, and this method proved more successful after an initial low take-up among the clients. Many of those who were suspicious of the purpose and benefits of the personal portfolio were motivated to participate after seeing the typed documentation of others, and the raising of the level of confidence among those who were participating:

> '... the work was considered by these clients as just another "official" way to "sort them out", but I was extremely pleased at the immediate surge in confidence that the typed portfolios brought out of the clients. I cannot emphasise enough the reward given in personal terms of seeing themselves in this clear, concise, positive way.' (Tutor.)

The tutor, who had considerable experience of ABE work and prison education, worked individually with the more 'difficult'

clients (those with severe problems, either personal or literacy) and often used the preparation work as a tool in teaching literacy. The project officer worked mainly with the more motivated probation clients and also some of the other unemployed people who use the centre. Most of the work in vocational counselling and portfolio preparation was carried out in the informal atmosphere of the centre's snack-bar.

Vocational guidance was a constant input at the centre, from both the Probation Service Employment Officer and the tutor. Information on free training and education courses was always available and participants were encouraged to explore the options offered. Many enrolled on part-time courses.

During the time the project funded work at the centre, eight people completed portfolios and others started portfolios that will be completed in the future. Many other clients benefited from the other aspects of the project (for example, guidance and information about employment), or gained help in completing a CV.

PROGRESSION: EXAMPLES

- **Male aged 20**, who was initially subversive during group activities, produced an excellent portfolio which he used at job interviews. He has now gained full-time employment: 'his attitude during the project work altered, and he is now a reasonable and pleasant group member' (Tutor).
- **Male aged 24**. At first suspicious of portfolio work, he initially gave a false name and address on his CV! He rapidly changed his attitude, worked hard and produced an excellent portfolio. He intends to expand his small part-time window-cleaning business or start an alternative business. He has visited several business agencies on his own initiative and has gained confidence in his ability to succeed.
- **Male aged 28**, with severe personal, literacy and communication problems. He took great pride in his portfolio work, completing much of it at home. This led him to explore several possibilities and he has since gained full-time employment: 'an impossibility a year ago' (Tutor).
- **Female aged 28**, who had achieved a good standard of education (was formerly a nurse). She has had great personal difficulties, which she has started to overcome. Since participating in the project, she has gained entry to a full-time Access to CQSW course linked to Bristol University at a local college.
- **Female, 40s**. She has gained renewed confidence in her high-level tailoring skills. She has registered as a prospective tutor at an adult education centre and has a good chance of teaching dressmaking to adults. She is also thinking of starting her own business.

  'For this group the project brought a real change. Perhaps all the personal changes cannot be attributed to it, but I feel that the speed of the changes coinciding with production of portfolio work must be noted.' (Tutor.)

One young woman of 20, who completed an excellent portfolio in a very short period of time, has not been able to gain the employment she was hoping for. This could be due to the fact that her personal presentation does not yet match the higher quality of the document, which clearly expresses her experience of care work in competence statements. Her personal life-style (she has had several changes of temporary accommodation) also does not, as yet, allow her to exploit her abilities fully.

This experience highlights the need for developing the job-seeking and job maintenance skills of the probation centre clients, and it is recognised that these skills need to be emphasised more in the future.

The tutor is now being funded by the Probation Service to continue her work at the centre.

> 'The REPLAN Project came at the right time for the 6-8 people that benefited most from our work. There is a small group of others who did not achieve portfolio completion during the time, but, who will, I feel, go on to do so in the next 6 months, as their circumstances and attitudes alter. Much of the background confidence and counselling work had been done before January 1987 with the clients who achieved portfolio work and the time was ripe for them to look again at their lives and begin planning new future approaches to work and living. I have continued working with the group as an Adult Literacy tutor with a brief which includes Maths, English and social and personal counselling and there are now signs that others who were not ready to accept the type of analysis required to make a portfolio during the early part of the year are now ready to do so. I shall offer portfolio work as part of the scheme, to those who require it.' (Tutor.)

> 'We were rather disappointed at the relatively low participation of clients, but now we have had some experience and can see the value of portfolio preparation, we are going to ensure the continuation of this work and hope that many more clients will be involved in the future.' (Probation Officer.)

PORTFOLIO

Name: A... T... S...

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: A... T... S...

Address: [illegible]
Elmgrove
BRISTOL BS10

Date of birth: 19-5-46

Nationality: British

Marital status: Married with two children

Education

St Thomas More Secondary Modern School 1957 — 1961
Achieved a good standard of education

Current driving licence

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

EMPLOYER	JOB TITLE	JOB DESCRIPTION	DATES
Apex Technical Services 300 Hotwell Road Hotwells Bristol	Draughtsman/ assistant	To create various draughtsmanship and delivery to clients	late/Aug 1985 Temporary contract
Pirelli Cables Ltd Leigh Road Eastleigh	Draughtsman/ junior's duties	To assist in all aspects of cables design section	May 1974 Dec 1984
Wilson Engineering Staple Hill Fishponds Bristol	Semi-skilled engineer	Millers, turners, fitting and assembly	1972 May 1974
Rolls Royce Ltd Filton Bristol	Semi-skilled	Millers, turners, fitting and assembly	1970 1972

Between 1961–1970 I had various jobs including Maintenance Draughtsman and Fabrication and Welding and Service Engineer, before I finally joined the pursuit that appealed the most, and that was Draughtsman.

NOTE: This participant gained permanent employment nine weeks after leaving the workshop. He credits his portfolio as a confidence-booster prior to interviews.

Hobbies and interests

I am a DIY enthusiast around the home, who also enjoys serious reading, and cricket. Local history and events also interest me, as does driving and travel.

Referees

The names and addresses of his two most recent employers were given.

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Job title: Drawing office assistant (temporary contract) **Date:** 1985

Responsibilities and skills used

1. Erase and correct drawings
   - using a range of erasing equipment, e.g. electric gum
   - checking information on drawings was correct
   - correcting information on drawings
2. Reprographics
   - operating a range of equipment including vello copier
3. Filing information
   - organising information bank for draughtsperson's use, e.g. trade manuals
4. Delivery and collection
   - using firm's car to collect and deliver drawings and specifications for clients
   - dealing with clients' enquiries and concerns diplomatically
   - responding to clients' needs speedily
5. Confidentiality
   - observing the Official Secrets Act (Ministry of Defence requirement)

Job title: Telephone cable jointer's mate **Date:** 1974–1984

Responsibilities and skills used

1. Assisting jointer in joining telephone cables (travelled throughout British Isles)
   - understand and use colour codes
   - solder wires accurately
   - set up and terminate cables in Post Office (British Telecom) exchanges
   - set up and terminate cables in signal systems for British Rail (including East Coast of Scotland)
2. Testing and commissioning telephone and railway systems
   - using 'meggers' to test sections for insulation
   - testing for crossed wires
   - rectifying faults
   - using wide range of advanced digital equipment (e.g. Pegelmesser, Pegelsender ...)
3. Welding
   - using various techniques for coupling insulation mouldings and air pressure
   - working to exact specifications to maintain air pressure throughout systems
4. Pressure testing (including work on 15 megahertz cable)
   - using barometers
   - using manometers
   - using air cabinets
5. Wiring
   - using audio and coaxial systems
6. Other duties:
   - driving transit van
   - ordering tools and equipment
   - working without supervision
   - working as part of a team

NOTE:

Due to new technology the whole workforce in this area at Pirelli was made redundant

Job title: Semi-skilled engineer **Date:** 1972–1974

Responsibilities and skills used

1. Milling (small batch work)
   - using a variety of milling machinery including:
     - vertical
     - horizontal
     - universal
   - to specified limits (+ and – 0.001in)
   - using micrometers
   - using depth gauges
   - using the vernier scale
2. Turning
   - setting up and operating machinery
   - producing non standard threads to exact specifications
3. Form work
   - setting up power presses to exact specifications
   - operating power presses
4. Fabricating and welding
   - understanding and interpreting drawings and specifications
   - manufacture tar/bitumen boilers
   - operating a variety of appropriate machinery including:
     - rollers
     - guillotines
     - osmond cutter
   - welding using electrical equipment
   - brazing

Job title: Semi skilled engineer **Date:** 1970-1972

Responsibilities and skills used

1. Initial training

   — including: maths with testing
   Health and Safety at work
   milling machine operation

2. Milling on production aeroplane blades

   — operating vertical, horizontal, universal machinery
   — operating computer controlled machinery
   — working to production deadlines

Hobbies

DIY

As a practical person, I have always been interested in house maintenance and have carried out a variety of tasks, including wiring work and basic plumbing. I have also owned houses which needed major alterations and/or repair work. The following list includes some of the larger jobs I have undertaken.

Tasks undertaken and skills used

1. Building garden shed

   — planning, designing and estimating
   — selecting materials
   — constructing shed: using bricks
   using timber
   using cement and concrete
   — building pitched roof
   — inserting door and windows
   — erecting shelves
   — using a variety of finishes

2. Laying drive

   removing existing concrete drive
   laying hardcore
   levelling ground and establishing drainage
   estimating and purchasing material required
   laying and levelling pre-mix concrete

3. Constructing patio

   designing and planning location and type required
   preparing ground (digging, levelling)
   laying hardcore and levelling)
   filling, using dry cement
   constructing feature wall from bricks and screen blocks

4. Building walls

   removing existing wall
   cleaning existing bricks for re-use
   rebuilding using recycled materials

5. Interior structural alterations
(convert 2 rooms to 1; extend kitchen by removing larder wall)

- identifying weight-bearing walls
- identifying direction of rafters
- removing internal wall using props
- inserting lintel
- filling each side of lintel using cement
- finishing off: plastering
  priming
  painting

6. Enlarging arch in hallway

- see (5) above and:
- producing accurate drawings (curved)
- producing and inserting accurately curved wooden template

7. Using and maintaining a variety of tools including:

- drills
- planes
- saws (electrical/manual)
- blow lamp
- chisels/spanners/trowels etc

8. Erecting shelving

- planning and design
- construction/fitting
- finishing

9. Tiling

- planning and costing
- preparing surfaces
- selecting tiles
- cutting, fixing and finishing

10. Building fireplaces

- removing existing fireplaces
- designing replacement fireplaces in both stone and timber
- constructing fireplaces

11. Painting and decorating

- preparing surfaces for redecoration (e.g. stripping/filling)
- using a variety of finishes (e.g. wallpaper/paint/cladding)

Photographs

Photographs included in the portfolio: patio, garden shed, drive, internal alternations (room extensions, fireplaces, bathroom etc., as available).

Interest

Travel

Between 1965-1972 I travelled for long periods of time throughout Europe and the Near East, with one or two companions living very cheaply or working whenever possible in different places.

The countries I visited include Spain, France, Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Turkey and Russia (very briefly by accident!).

The work I did on my travels included barwork, washing up in restaurants, and working on a small fishing boat.

My experiences during this period of my life were interesting and valuable. I learnt many things, for example, about people, different environments, different politics, social life and culture. I learnt how to cope and use my initiative in unfamiliar or difficult situations. This has all helped me become a more tolerant person than I may have been, as well as generally broadening my horizons.

Personal summary

I would summarise my personal skills and qualities of character by emphasising my adaptability to new situations and different types of work. I learn new skills quickly and have a very practical mind. I can communicate well with people of all types and the standard of my writing and practical maths are good. I received a good standard of education and have kept up to date with learning and new ideas.

My past work experience has taught me to be precise, accurate and positive. It has also taught me the value of reliability and good time-keeping. I am able to work in a team, or as an individual with responsibility. Working away from home or working unsocial hours does not bother me — I have often had to travel for periods during my working life and meet deadlines which demanded long hours.

I am able to follow set instructions or to make decisions myself. However, I consider my honest character to be my most valuable asset as an employee.

Coursework assessment

'Make Your Experience Count'

This portfolio has been assembled by Mr S... during a course he has been attending at ... from 6 November 1989.

During the course, Mr S... has demonstrated that he can:

- understand unfamiliar ideas
- speedily grasp new ways of working
- listen and respond to others, both in a group and as an individual
- communicate effectively in both speech and writing
- sequence his thoughts logically
- select and record relevant information
- complete set tasks reliably

Mr S...'s commitment to the course has been excellent. He has attended each session as well as completing coursework tasks at home.

His wide-ranging interests have been of positive value to other course members. During discussion of a variety of topics he has shown an open-minded approach and consideration for the opinions and feelings of others whilst at the same time expressing his own view clearly and persuasively.

SIGNED: _____ **(TUTORS)**

DATE:

APPENDIX B: EMPLOYER SURVEY

This survey was carried out in 23 companies in the Bristol area by two researchers, who conducted interviews of 1–2 hours in each firm. A summary of the results of the survey follows.

Number of jobs analysed: 54

Main contracting areas of employment identified

- traditional manual clerical work;
- unskilled manual work;
- ancillary work (for example, canteen staff).

Main expanding areas of employment identified

- skilled, semi-skilled and specialist work;
- sales (especially retail);
- care;
- administration;
- computer-related work;
- part-time work.

Twelve of the 23 employers stated that recruitment was stable. Eleven stated that they foresaw a period of expansion.

Methods of recruitment policy and methods of finding employees for expanding areas of work

- internal advertising (for all but lowest level);
- direct approaches from potential employees;
- jobcentres;
- local press;
- existing staff recruit (for example, family and friends);
- national press/trade journals (tends to be for higher levels);
- YTS/apprenticeships.

The first four methods on this list were the most frequently used.

Employers stated that the most effective method of recruitment was direct approaches from members of the public, followed closely by internal advertising (for promotion). Three employers were very critical of the jobcentres, who often sent them unsuitable people (for example, a securities firm had been sent candidates with criminal records on several occasions).

Recruitment difficulties

- people with experience;
- specialist (especially in manufacturing);
- work involving shifts/unsocial hours;
- electricians/maintenance workers;
- care workers (especially qualified);
- 'good' graduates;
- supervisory/managerial staff.

Job description: sample

Fifty-four jobs were covered in a range of occupations. Most were unskilled or semi-skilled.

Employers were asked to identify jobs that:

- an 'average' unemployed person would have a chance of getting;
- that are in expanding areas of work.

Pay and conditions

Range:

Lowest	£77 per week
Highest	£1,054 per month

Selection criteria: formal qualifications

• none	45
• 'O' levels	6
• craft certificate	1
• craft certificate preferred	2

Age limits

• preferred minimum	20–25 years
• preferred maximum	50–55 years
• school-leavers only	3 firms
• 'unofficial' upper limit of 35 years	2

Tests used

• none	29
• aptitude tests	9
• specialist tests	9
• numeracy/literacy	8
• observation/assessment during probation/training period	8

Requirements

It was striking that all the employers were much more forthcoming about 'qualities' than they were about knowledge/skills, and also seemed to be able to express exactly the qualities they were looking for. In contrast, they often found it difficult to specify requirements in the other categories.

a) **Skills**

• general (for example: numeracy; physical strength; interpersonal)	34
• none	20
• specific (for example: keyboard; driving)	18
• covered by qualification	1

General and specific skills were often combined.

b) **Knowledge**

- none 32
- general/related to field 13
- specialised 9

c) **Qualities**

	Frequency
dependability/reliability	18
physical fitness	12
cleanliness/good grooming	9
ability to work with others	7
common sense	6
honesty/integrity	6
patience	6
persistence	6
intelligence/brightness	5
initiative	5
ambition	5
pleasant/helpfulness	5
maturity	4
hard-working	4
motivation	4
even-tempered	4
outgoing/cheerful	3
concentration/accuracy	3
respect/co-operation	3
sympathy/warmth	3
ability to communicate	3
tact	3
flexibility	2
resilience	2
leadership	2
commitment	2
courtesy	2
sense of humour	1
caring attitude	1
enthusiasm	1
sense of quality	1

The lowest-scoring qualities were usually specifically job-related, for example:

- 'courtesy was required for a job involving constant contact with the public';
- 'sense of quality was required for a sewing-machinist's job';
- 'caring attitude was required as a care assistant'.

Specific policies with regard to:

Mature applicants

- no policy (some added, 'purely on merit') 33
- positive welcome 16
- prefer younger applicant (under 35) 14
- only recruit school-leavers 1

Ethnic minorities

- equal opportunities policy in operation 11
- no specific policy 10
- positive discrimination 2

Previous experience

- advantageous 25
- not necessary 20
- specific experience required 9

Training provided

- formal induction/courses 33
- on-the-job 32
- no training 1
  (these require previous experience/expertise)

The figures for courses includes firms using distance learning packages. Several firms combined formal induction/courses with on-the-job training.

Progression opportunities within organisation

- limited (to lower management/supervisory levels) 36
- unlimited (to higher management) 15
- none possible 3

Advice to unemployed adult who wanted to apply for a job in the organisation

Pre-interview

- write or telephone on spec (write or telephone personnel manager in person, 5) 13
- be persistent; ask for interview 4
- find out about company; ask for background information 7
- keep in touch with jobcentre; situations vacant in press 6
- be clear about what you want 6
- update your skills/do specialist course 3
- fill in application forms fully and correctly 3
- analyse your strengths and weaknesses 1

Note

- 2 employers always interview those who contact the company.
- 10 employers always keep letters/CVs on file and match to vacancies as they occur.
- 1 employers automatically send application forms and refer to these as vacancies occur.

At interview

Behaviour: positive/confidence/enthusiastic/interested/alert 11

Appearance: neat/clean 9

Others: 'sell yourself' 3
'be honest' 2
ask questions 2

Response to portfolio

- useful/helpful 11
- would be impressed 6
- should 'tailor' portfolio more to suit job; too much information, 'a bit over the top' (especially for lower-grade jobs) 18
- would prefer: to use at interview 7
  CV only 5
  to receive portfolio with application 4
- 'irrelevant' 1

The first impression was usually good — then on looking more closely at the portfolio, the initial positive response was often modified.

It must be emphasised that the portfolio used during the interviews (see Appendix A) was not particularly relevant to the majority of the jobs covered in the survey.

Only 2 employers said they would be impressed to receive any portfolio, regardless of its relevance to the industry. Five of the 25 employers stated that they would rather not have access to a portfolio at any stage of the recruitment procedure.

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